categories whereas Model 'B' envisages an additional non-permanent seat as well as creation of a new non-permanent category for a longer term tenure. It may be mentioned that the High Level Panel was Panel of independent experts and not an inter-Governmental body. The UN Secretary General in his report titled "In larger freedom: towards security, development and human rights for all" released on March 21, 2005 has urged Member States to consider the two options, models A and B, proposed in the report of the High Level Panel, or any other viable proposals in terms of size and balance that have emerged on the basis of either model. Discussions on this issue are underway in the UN. It is now for the UN members to take forward this process and to reach a decision. Regarding India's position on the issue of veto, Hon'ble Prime Minister has stated our position on the membership of the UN Security Council in the Parliament, which is that "there is no confusion regarding our position on our candidature for a Permanent Seat on the Security Council. At this point, all Permanent Members have veto powers. We are a candidate. This issue may arise in respect of any new Permanent Members who may be admitted. Our fundamental position remains clear. We do not believe there should be any discrimination in the Security Council and there should be no distinction between Permanent Members who have the veto and those who don't."

Passport Office at Visakhapatnam

4537. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the positive steps taken by the passport office at Visakhapatnam to improve the delivery of passports and good public reception;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Visakhapatnam model is not being replicated in other passport centres of the country;

(c) what steps are proposed to study the Visakhapatnam model of public interaction to improve all passport offices in the country; and

(d) steps proposed to improve the functioning of passport offices all over the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Facilitation counters manned by ex-servicemen/NGOs have been set up in several Passport Offices. These facilitation counters provide services like sale of application forms, filling up forms at nominal charges and provision for photocopying documents. Tele-enquiry and web-based status check facilities are also available to the applicants to check the status of their application.

(d) The Government have taken various steps to speed up the issuance of passports and improve the functioning of passport offices. These steps are (i) proper scrutiny of the application form and the enclosed documents at the stage of submission of applications to avoid objections at later stages (ii) regular interaction with the police authorities to expedite police verification reports (iii) setting up facilitation counters in several passport offices (iv) opening of District Passport Cells in various districts in almost all the States with a view to bring the Passport services closer to the applicants and (v) Starting on-line registration of passport applications in some Passport Offices.

Amendment in Haj Act, 2002

4538. SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some amendments were proposed in Haj Act, 2002 by the Haj Committee of India;

(b) if so, what are the amendments and Government's reaction thereon;

(c) whether it is also a fact that some bye-laws relating to Haj Act, 2002 were framed and proposed to Government by the Haj Committee of India for approval and acceptance; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The amendments to the Haj Committee Act, 2002 proposed by the Haj Committee of India in September 2004 related to extending the scope of the Act to include pilgrimage of Muslims, in addition to the Haj